



Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families

DCYF Contracted Programs

2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update

March 13, 2020

Intended Audience: *Organizations that provide contracted services for the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth & Families (DCYF); including community-based services and supports, as well as those operating congregate care programs, both group homes and residential treatment programs funded, operated, licensed, and regulated by DCYF.*

Acting Director Kevin Aucoin has several critical COVID-19 updates to share. Read through these updates carefully and let us know if you have any questions. As we know the information keeps evolving. We sincerely appreciate your partnership.

State Updates

Governor Raimondo just held a press conference to update residents on several changes at the State level:

- Schools: April school vacation has been moved up to next week (March 16 to March 20). Over the course of the next week, schools will work with RIDE on distance-learning plans. If necessary, the following week (beginning on March 23) will be a distance-learning week.
- Child Care Providers: The Governor has asked childcare providers to remain open.
- Nursing Homes: Effective immediately, all visits are canceled at Rhode Island nursing homes.
- Group Gatherings: No Rhode Islander should go to any non-essential group gathering.
- International Travelers: Anyone arriving from abroad is advised to self-quarantine for 14 days.

Family Court Update

The Family Court will remain open next week, but all court calendars are canceled. More information please [click here](#).

Family Visitation

As a precaution and to ensure the safety of our staff and families, we are canceling all family visitation next week. This includes family visitation at the Training School, at DCYF offices, visits arranged by foster parents, and **our contracted visitation and congregate care programs. For those who are specific visitation services Providers please feel free to call us if you have additional questions in this regard.**

One of the cornerstones of supporting our children and youth in care is ensuring *meaningful family time*. The Department is building a plan, over the next week, on how DCYF will manage family visitation safely going forward. We need to take action to implement alternative forms of connection between youth and families, via phone calls and video conferencing. **We will assess the situation on a week-to-week basis and provide updates to staff when available.**

Face-to-Face Visits with Youth and Families

DCYF believes that being in contact with our children and families at risk is critical to their safety and well-being. For your information, in order to plan for the upcoming week, we are asking our DCYF staff to review their scheduled meetings and appointments, determine which children and families require contact, what level of contact they require, and how we can manage that. Our first step will be to pre-screen the households where we have visits to determine if anyone is sick and/or asked to quarantine. If household members are sick or on quarantine, we are going to work to set up alternative ways of being in contact (such as FaceTime, Skype, etc.).

For staff in Child Protective Services, DCYF will pre-screen calls coming into the hotline to assess if anyone is sick or if they have been exposed to COVID-19. When CPIs get to an investigation, they will pre-screen the household (from a safe distance) and take precautions as necessary. A State team is working on protocols for emergency home visitors like CPIs and protocols will be shared with staff as soon as possible. We will provide more details on this later today.

Trainings

For your information, DCYF is cancelling all workforce development trainings and foster parent trainings next week.

Preventative Measures

It cannot be overstated that the best way to prevent the spread of COVID-19 is to take preventative measures, including:

- Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Please stay out of work when you are sick.
- Cough or sneeze into your elbow or use a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- If you have not already done so, get a flu shot.

How to Talk to Children about COVID-19

As adults, we need to talk to the children and youth in our care about what is happening and help them understand why we are taking certain steps. While we want children and youth to understand that this is serious, we do not want to cause them to be afraid. There are many resources available on the internet, that can help you with this. Several links are included below:

- [Talking about Diseases in the News](#) (Bradley Hospital)
- [How to Talk to Your Kids about Coronavirus](#) (PBS)
- [How to Talk to Kids about Coronavirus](#) (NY Times)
- [Talking to Children During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#) (SAMHSA)

Taking Care of Each Other

This is a very stressful time for everyone, and it is important that we all stay calm and support each other. Below are some resources that can be accessed for additional support:

- DCYF staff have access to Peer Support staff to discuss any concerns.
- The state's BH Link hotline is available anytime by calling at 401-414-LINK.